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# Trends in Soviet Policy in the Third World Under Gorbachev

An Intelligence Assessment

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# Trends in Soviet Policy in the Third World Under Gorbachev

An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by  
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Comments and queries are welcome and may be  
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## **Trends in Soviet Policy in the Third World Under Gorbachev**

### **Key Judgments**

*Information available  
as of 28 February 1989  
was used in this report.*

Soviet policy in the Third World under Gorbachev has shifted toward pragmatism and away from the ideological strictures of the past. Whether additional shifts will occur is not yet clear. However, the momentum of change already evident and the extent of Soviet discussion of significantly modified concepts of international relations and national security make it increasingly unlikely that this or any other Soviet regime can simply "turn back the clock" and return to the attitudes and policies of the Brezhnev years.

Soviet behavior has, in our view, been shaped by two overarching priorities. The primacy of domestic reconstruction and reform has led Moscow to seek a more benign and stable external environment that would provide increased security at a lower cost, making it easier to focus on problems at home. This has led to Soviet efforts to improve relations with the West and China, reduce the burden of supporting a network of Third World allies, and obtain increased trade, investment, and technology from the outside world.

The second priority is Moscow's intention to expand its role as a global actor, a role that is the basis of its claim to superpower status. Consequently, the Soviets have tried to avoid being seen as retreating from the Third World in the face of US pressure, revitalized their diplomacy in key Third World regions, and tried to expand ties to states the USSR had previously neglected.

Under Gorbachev, the Soviets have widened the range of policy instruments used to promote their interests. Moscow's most effective new tools have been its emphasis on cooperation with all states and a more polished team of players to implement policy. The Soviets also have taken a more dynamic approach to international organizations such as the United Nations. At the same time, the USSR remains the leading supplier of arms to developing countries and continues to rely on a variety of active measures programs—many of which have been refined in line with Gorbachev's more sophisticated political approach—to support its policies and discredit those of the West.

Moscow's approach to regional conflicts has changed substantially. Soviet leaders have opened a dialogue with Washington on these disputes, supported settlement processes in several regions, withdrawn from Afghanistan, and urged client states such as Angola, Cambodia, and Ethiopia to

move toward negotiated settlements of disputes and conflicts. The Soviets have continued to supply arms to their allies, however, suggesting that, although they want political resolutions, they are not forcing their clients to accept "peace at any price."

In two regions of high priority to the USSR—East Asia and the Middle East—the USSR has succeeded in reasserting itself as a central player, increasing its credibility with former adversaries like China, South Korea, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. Elsewhere in the Third World most nations have responded with interest to Moscow's new political tone and desire for economic relations. The pace of these gains, however, has been constrained by Moscow's unwillingness to pay a financial price to improve relations, the relative unattractiveness of Soviet goods, and the USSR's desire to avoid offending existing allies like Syria and North Korea.

Economic issues have dominated Moscow's recent relations with its Marxist-Leninist allies. In our judgment, the Soviets, although not abandoning their Third World clients, are trying to move toward a new type of relationship that stresses mutual economic benefit and political pragmatism, not ideology and military aid, which may well decline as progress is made on ending regional conflicts. This has led to tensions with many clients.

The Gorbachev leadership has pursued a two-track policy toward revolution in the Third World. On the one hand, it has sustained military support for selected revolutionary groups such as the African National Congress and maintained quiet contact with other organizations. On the other hand, Moscow has urged local Communist parties to participate in the political process as the way to promote change. The military side of the two-track policy enables the USSR to retain its credibility in situations where it now has few other assets, while the political track expands its options for influencing future developments.

Moscow's new approach will make it more difficult for Washington to "sell" Third World leaders on the need to contain an expansionist USSR and may complicate US efforts to maintain military access in some regions. The United States will have to deal with the USSR's improving ability to seize the international initiative on issues of interest to developing nations and will have to respond to Soviet appeals for increased cooperation on economic and humanitarian problems in the Third World.

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**Scope Note**

This paper examines Soviet policy in the Third World under Gorbachev from a global perspective, with the objectives of assessing broad trends and patterns, highlighting areas of continuity and change, and evaluating the implications for US interests. For the purposes of this paper, the term "Third World" refers to the countries of Asia (excluding Japan), the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).

The paper's conclusions are intended to complement papers issued by the Office of Soviet Analysis that cover Soviet strategy and activity in particular countries and regions of the Third World. The paper also complements two other studies recently published by the Office of Soviet Analysis: *Moscow's 1989 Agenda for US-Soviet Relations* (SOV 89-10012X, February 1989, [ ]), and *Gorbachev's Foreign Policy* (SOV 89-10014X, February 1989, [ ]).

## Trends in Soviet Policy in the Third World Under Gorbachev

### Goals and Instruments of Soviet Policy in the Third World

#### Core Priorities, Multiple Objectives

Soviet policies in the developing world under Gorbachev have been shaped, in our view, by two overarching priorities. The first of these has been stated explicitly by Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders: the need for domestic reconstruction and reform. Gorbachev wrote in 1987 that "*perestroika* is an urgent necessity arising from the profound processes of development in our society. Any delay in beginning *perestroika* could have led to an exaggerated internal situation . . . which would have been fraught with serious social, economic, and political crises." The overriding priority of domestic change has generated a set of short- to medium-term foreign policy imperatives different from those of the Brezhnev era.

In general, the Soviets appear committed to seeking a more benign external environment that would give them a higher degree of security at a lower cost and thus make it easier for them to focus on domestic economic priorities and political problems such as resurgent minority nationalism. Soviet representatives [ ] told a January 1987 meeting of Soviet Bloc party secretaries responsible for ideology and foreign policy issues that the USSR seeks a peaceful international situation in order to provide the proper context for "radical reform" in the Soviet Union. Among the specific foreign policy objectives that arise from this general goal are improved relations with the United States, Western Europe, and China, including efforts to resolve conflicts in the Third World that heighten the risks of confrontation between the superpowers, and international arrangements—bilateral and multilateral—that enhance stability.

Another new general objective springing from the core goal of domestic rebuilding has been the need to improve the terms of Soviet economic interaction with the outside world. In the Third World this has meant, first and foremost, attempting to reduce the mounting

economic burden of supporting the USSR's network of allies. Gorbachev and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze told the Soviet foreign policy establishment in May 1986 that the USSR would have to reevaluate worldwide commitments that drain its resources and change them, if necessary [ ]

[ ] Also, the Soviet Union has sought greater returns from trade, investment, and technological exchange with the developing world. This has been a predominant theme in the writings of Soviet academic experts, and Shevardnadze told the foreign policy establishment that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must pay more attention to economic matters in formulating its policy plans.

The second core goal that has shaped Soviet policy in the Third World under Gorbachev is Moscow's intention to expand its role as a global actor, a role that remains a critical part of its claim to superpower status. Although this concern is not stated as explicitly as the imperative of domestic reform, our analysis of Soviet behavior in the developing world indicates that the USSR continues to attach substantial importance to playing an active part in Third World affairs, especially in the Middle East and East Asia, areas of high political and economic interest where the USSR has not been a predominant actor (see foldout on page 21).

One of the specific policy objectives deriving from this second core concern is the Soviet Union's intention not to yield its existing positions in the Third World in the face of what it believes to be a far-reaching US challenge. In a massive 1986 press campaign, the Soviets coined the term "neoglobalism" to describe what they saw as Washington's policy of using its military, economic, and political power to attack and, if possible, overthrow Moscow's Third World allies. In May 1987 [ ]

[ ] said that the USSR would not bow to such



pressure, and, in a summer 1988 article, Yevgeniy Primakov, a leading academician and adviser to Gorbachev, justified Soviet defense of the USSR's existing allies in the Third World.

In addition, the USSR has sought to extend its presence and influence in regions that it had previously neglected or from which it had been excluded, such as most of Central and South America, and the South Pacific. [ ] said in late 1987 that the USSR wanted to expand relations with states it had previously ignored or treated solely in the context of their relations with the United States. [ ]

[ ] In a change from previous regimes, however, the Gorbachev leadership does not spotlight Marxism-Leninism as an effective vehicle for expanding Soviet influence in the Third World. Gorbachev reportedly told Warsaw Pact Foreign Ministers in 1987 that export of revolution is ineffective and too costly.

#### A Broader Range of Instruments

Under Gorbachev, the Soviets have revitalized and widened the range of policy instruments used to promote their interests in the Third World. In previous years the USSR relied heavily on arms transfers as the basis of its presence and influence in developing countries. Soviet policy also suffered from an inflexible and ineffective diplomatic apparatus. Gorbachev believed that revamping the tools of policy was essential if the USSR were to change its image in the Third World and implement its new foreign policy agenda. [ ]

The most effective tool of Moscow's new approach is its *changed political style*. The Soviets have shaken up their foreign policy apparatus and brought in more competent diplomats better able to engage in constructive give and take with Third World officials (see inset on policymaking apparatus). Also, Moscow has moderated the tone of its political pronouncements. Whereas the Soviets used to sharply criticize the nations of ASEAN—for example, as obedient objects of US policy—a 1987 Soviet broadcast praised ASEAN as a force for peace and stability in Asia. In approaching nonsocialist states, Soviet officials have emphasized areas of agreement and the USSR's desire for cooperation with all states regardless of political orientation.

Moscow has also *intensified its economic activity*, holding out the prospect of increased trade and financial activity to developing states and highlighting its interest in joint ventures and barter deals that do not require large outlays of hard currency. [ ]

[ ] in late 1987 indicates that Moscow offered a lengthy list of proposals to the Philippines for new ventures in the energy, mining, transport, fishing, and ship repair sectors, and the USSR has made a variety of offers to Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay for expanded commercial relations, according to [ ]. Our review of Soviet economic proposals indicates that they focus on ventures the USSR expects to be profitable and involve little direct development aid or concessionary financing.

The Gorbachev leadership has taken a more dynamic approach to *international political and economic organizations*, notably the United Nations. Over the past few years, the Soviets have increased their financial contributions to the UN, called for a greater UN role in solving regional conflicts, and put forward a proposal for a "Comprehensive System of International Security" that, among other things, seeks to address Third World concerns about development and security issues. On the economic side, the USSR has tried to expand its contacts with global economic institutions such as the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs and with regional economic and development bodies. For example, it has signaled its interest in joining Asian economic organizations by sending observers to sessions of the Asian Development Bank and Pacific Economic Cooperation Council.

In addition to these new dimensions of Soviet policy, the USSR continues to make extensive use of *arms transfers*. Total Soviet military deliveries to the Third World have remained constant over the 1985-88 period in the range of about \$18-19 billion per year, making the USSR the leading supplier of weapons to developing states. The bulk of Soviet shipments has gone to clients fighting insurgencies and to longtime customers such as India and Iraq, but Moscow has also used arms offers to court new objects of interest.

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### **Changing the Apparatus**

*The USSR's foreign policymaking apparatus has undergone two major reorganizations since 1985. We believe that these changes were intended to enhance the ability of Gorbachev and his allies to make and monitor Soviet foreign policy and to allow them to bring it into line with the USSR's domestic needs.*

*The first shakeup was aimed primarily at replacing Brezhnev-era holdovers in key positions. This phase saw the appointment of Eduard Shevardnadze as Foreign Minister and Anatoliy Dobrynin—previously Ambassador to the United States—as chief of the Communist Party's International Department (ID). Dobrynin met with little success in his efforts to transform the ID from a stronghold of ideological orthodoxy into a more effective player capable of supervising the overall conception and implementation of foreign policy. In September 1988, the leadership tried again. As part of a larger party reorganization, all of the Central Committee departments with responsibility for foreign affairs—the International, Bloc Relations, and Cadres Abroad Departments—were combined and put under the authority of a 23-man "foreign policy commission" headed by a key Gorbachev ally, Politburo member Aleksandr Yakovlev. This consolidation could result in more effective policy coordination, although the relationship between the new ID and the commission, members of which have indicated varying degrees of enthusiasm for "new thinking," could prove problematic.*

*The leadership has enjoyed far greater success at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), which has expanded its role significantly. Shevardnadze has presided over a major rejuvenation of the MFA, reorganizing the regional ministries, creating new departments for functional concerns such as arms control and human rights, and bringing to the fore younger, better educated officials. He has also used innovative techniques in support of policy changes. For example, First Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh told ☐ ☐ last year that public opinion polling was used for the first time in connection with the decision to withdraw from Afghanistan.*

*Changes in the legislative apparatus promise to expand the role of the Supreme Soviet in foreign policy decisionmaking and to turn Gorbachev's presidency from a largely ceremonial post into a potentially powerful executive position, further strengthening his hand in foreign affairs. Gorbachev also appears to be moving toward changes designed to secure input from outside the bureaucracy in the shaping of foreign policy. Although the forms of this involvement are not yet clear, it is possible that the restructured Supreme Soviet will become more active in debating foreign policy issues, perhaps even holding hearings in the manner of the US Congress.*

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### **New Dimensions of Soviet Policy**

#### **Major Moves on Regional Conflicts**

One of the most significant areas of change in Soviet policy under Gorbachev has been the USSR's approach to regional conflicts. Since 1985, Soviet leaders and diplomats have proclaimed their interest in finding political solutions to armed conflicts in the Third World, and over the past several years the

USSR has steadily intensified its rhetorical and diplomatic support for several regional settlement processes. Foreign Minister Shevardnadze summarized the basic positions of the new Soviet approach to solving regional conflicts in his July 1988 speech to the Foreign Ministry, stating that dialogue between the parties to a conflict, international cooperation to

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guarantee agreements, and national reconciliation with internal opponents are the main steps toward negotiated agreements.

Moscow's new approach reflects, in part, its objectives of limiting potential points of conflict with the West and of reasserting itself as a credible actor in regional affairs. In our judgment, these motives underlie the Soviet Union's renewed dynamism in the Middle East, where Soviet interaction with the key regional players has been aimed at promoting an international peace conference that would secure a Soviet role in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Similar goals, along with Moscow's desire to fend off US activism in the Third World, also appear to have shaped the Soviets' diplomatic activity during the last months of the Iran-Iraq war, when they sought to rally regional backing for reducing the US military presence in the Persian Gulf while keeping open their political options with both Tehran and Baghdad.

The most dramatic shift in Soviet policies, however, has come on another set of conflicts, the wars involving the USSR's Marxist-Leninist clients: Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Nicaragua. In our view, an additional central motive driving the USSR's support for political solutions in these cases has been its intention to reduce the economic burden of supporting its clients. In 1987 Gorbachev told Soviet Bloc foreign ministers that attempts to "export revolution" had drained the economic reserves of socialism, according [ ]

[ ] (see table 1). In addition, Moscow was disturbed by the problems that its involvement in regional conflicts posed for its pursuit of high-priority foreign policy goals, both in the Third World and at the East-West level. According [ ]

[ ] there was growing dissatisfaction among Soviet officials in early 1987 with the problems that the USSR's intervention in Afghanistan caused for its policy in the Middle East and elsewhere

In contrast to the pursuit by previous regimes of military solutions to these conflicts, the Gorbachev leadership stated its interest in negotiated settlements, called for the United Nations to mediate and monitor agreements, and urged the United States to play a

**Table 1**  
**The Cost of Soviet Military and Economic Involvement in Client States Fighting Insurgencies, 1985-87**

Million US \$

	1985	1986	1987	Total
Annual Total	13,020	12,920	15,455	41,395
Afghanistan				26,500
Angola				3,320
Ethiopia				2,265
Mozambique				740
Nicaragua				2,310
Cambodia				1,235
Vietnam *				5,205

\* Military assistance only, much of which has been used to support Vietnamese operations in Cambodia or to defend Vietnam from Chinese attacks in response to those operations.

constructive role by curtailing its backing of insurgents and joining with the USSR to guarantee agreements ending the disputes. The Soviets themselves participated in the Afghanistan negotiations and agreed to withdraw their forces under the terms of a UN-brokered agreement, and they were helpful, according to US diplomatic statements, in the US-mediated talks on Angola

In addition, the USSR has emphasized to its allies the desirability of political settlements (see table 2). Although the extent of Soviet willingness to exploit clients' military dependence to pressure them on this issue is unclear, numerous reports indicate that the Kremlin has driven the message home unambiguously. For example, Gorbachev has told Ethiopian President Mengistu twice within the past year that the Eritrean war should be "solved peacefully" [ ]

Its backing for political solutions to these conflicts and its own withdrawal from Afghanistan notwithstanding, the USSR has not insisted that its other clients negotiate from a position of military weakness.

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**Table 2**  
**Soviet Positions on Regional Conflicts**

	Soviet Personnel	Soviet Military Aid, 1985-87	Political Costs—External	Political Costs—Internal	Client Military Situation
Afghanistan	Peak of 114,000 combat troops, all withdrawn by 15 Feb 1988.  3,000 military advisers.	3,410	Very High Soviet involvement has had major negative impact on relations with US, China, the Arab world and many non-aligned nations.  Afghan invasion contributed substantially to poor image of USSR abroad.	Very High Significant opposition to Soviet involvement in many social sectors, including intellectuals whose support regime seeks to enlist for domestic reform.	Poor Regime unable to hold much of countryside, even with help of Soviet troops.
Cambodia	100 military advisers (main combat burden carried by Vietnamese troops).	840	High Soviet support for Vietnamese occupation disrupted relations with China, ASEAN states.  Soviets received repeated setbacks at United Nations on Cambodia issue.	Very Low Little domestic reaction evident.	Fair Vietnamese forces able to contain insurgency and keep it away from major cities.  Military situation could deteriorate as Vietnamese withdraw.
Angola	1,400 military advisers (major combat role played by 50,000 Cuban troops and advisers; Cubans scheduled to be withdrawn over next two and a half years under terms of Dec 1988 accord).	3,215	Low Most African and nonaligned states favored by the MPLA regime.  US concerned with Soviet involvement, but did not link Angola directly with other East-West issues.	Very Low Little domestic reaction evident.	Fair (1985)-Good (1988) 1988 augmentation of Cuban troops tipped military balance in MPLA's favor.
Ethiopia	1,700 military advisers (3,000 to 4,000 Cuban troops and advisers not involved in counterinsurgency activity).	2,055	Low African states support Ethiopian claim to upholding territorial integrity against rebel separatism.	Very Low Little domestic reaction evident.	Fair 1988 insurgent successes stunned regime.  Insurgents do not threaten capital.
Nicaragua	55 military advisers.	1,310	Low-Moderate Significant irritant in relations with US.  Some regional opposition to Soviet role.  Many Third World and Western states sympathetic to Sandinista regime.	Very Low Little domestic reaction evident.	Fair to Good Insurgents do not threaten capital.  Overall military balance favorable to Managua regime.

Table 2 (continued)

Million US

Soviet Positions on Settlement	Soviet Interaction With Clients	Constraints on Soviet Influence
<p>April 1988, signed Geneva accord providing for withdrawal of Soviet forces.</p> <p>Supported national reconciliation and power-sharing with opposition elements, but did not link to final agreement.</p> <p>Strongly insist on an end to outside support to rebels and a Soviet right to continue aiding Kabul regime.</p> <p>Not a direct partner in negotiations.</p> <p>Favor Hun Sen-Sihanouk talks, Bogor meeting, other regional peace efforts.</p> <p>Support national reconciliation with possible reduced role for CDGK, but do not regard this as essential to a settlement.</p> <p>Insist on an end to outside aid to the rebels.</p> <p>Not a direct partner in negotiations. In 1987, dropped previous disapproval of US mediation efforts.</p> <p>Stressed need for South African withdrawal from Angola, implementation of Namibian independence.</p>	<p>Soviets frequently pressed Afghan leadership to fall in line with Moscow's positions on a settlement, national reconciliation.</p> <p>Moscow has made clear to Vietnam its interest in a political settlement in Cambodia.</p> <p>Soviets urged Cubans and Angolans to move toward a political solution of the conflict.</p> <p>Soviet diplomats active on the margins of US-sponsored negotiating sessions; helped to keep Cubans and Angolans on track toward a settlement.</p>	<p>Internal conflicts in Afghan regime and overall brittleness of the government make it slow to respond to Soviet pressure.</p> <p>Vietnam is resistant to Soviet influence on core security concerns.</p> <p>Soviets do not want to jeopardize military access to Cam Ranh Bay.</p>
<p>No formal negotiations under way.</p> <p>Advocate political solution of northern insurgency on basis of Soviet-style regional autonomy.</p> <p>Favor rapprochement between Ethiopia and its neighbors, probably as means to stem aid to the rebels.</p> <p>Not a direct partner in negotiations.</p> <p>Offered rhetorical and diplomatic support for Contadora, Guatemala accords.</p> <p>Reserve right to aid Managua regime.</p>	<p>The USSR has repeatedly urged Ethiopia to seek a political settlement to the northern insurgencies.</p> <p>USSR has occasionally brokered meetings between rebel representatives and the Ethiopian regime.</p> <p>USSR reportedly has urged the Sandinistas to comply with the Guatemala accords.</p> <p>No indication Soviets have used the leverage provided by Nicaraguan military dependence to pressure the Sandinistas on an agreement.</p>	<p>Mengistu is resistant to outside influence of any kind, even from the Soviets.</p>

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**Figure 1**  
**Soviet Military and Economic Assistance**  
**to Cuba, Vietnam, and North Korea\***

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Under Gorbachev, the USSR has consistently provided its allies with at least enough military aid to contain the insurgencies. Most of them have received steady or increased levels of military aid since 1985; increases have been related more to the military needs of the client than to ability to pay (see figures 1 and 2). When Angolan forces experienced serious reverses on the battlefield in 1987, the USSR sent large amounts of arms and supplies by sea and, at considerable expense, by air. Similarly, the USSR boosted

arms shipments to Ethiopia when separatist rebels won a series of battles in early 1988, and Moscow and its Bloc allies have ensured Nicaraguan military dominance over resistance forces.

In addition, with the exception of a recent shift on the question of arms supplies to Afghanistan, Moscow has repeatedly rejected proposals that call for the restriction of military aid to its clients as part of a settlement, claiming that this is a matter of relations

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Figure 2  
Soviet Military Aid to Clients Fighting  
Insurgencies, 1984-88

reflects Moscow's aversion to being seen as abandoning its allies in the face of US pressure and its desire to maintain a presence in key areas of the Third World.

#### Key Regions: Getting Back in the Game

Moscow's goal of establishing itself as a central actor in regional affairs is reflected in its new activism in two regions of highest priority to the USSR—East Asia and the Middle East—where policy had stagnated under Brezhnev. In both areas, the Gorbachev leadership has put forward a series of security proposals that cast the USSR in a statesmanlike "above the battle" position, willing to help promote regional security through negotiation. It has stressed its desire for improved relations with all countries, including former adversaries such as South Korea and Israel. The Soviets also have tried to improve economic relations with regional states, especially with those in East Asia, which Soviet economic experts have identified as a vital source of trade and investment for *perestroika* in the USSR, especially development of the Soviet Far East.

Gorbachev has made concessions to China leading to improved relations, made overtures to South Korea, and stepped up Soviet courtship of other non-Communist states such as Thailand and the Philippines. He has also made two major speeches laying out a broad set of proposals for East Asia, including removal of foreign military bases and troops, establishment of nuclear-free zones, talks on naval arms reduction, and a Helsinki-type conference on regional security.

In the Middle East, the Soviets reactivated their call for an international conference on the Arab-Israeli conflict, proposed a "preparatory conference" of the UN Security Council's permanent members to build diplomatic momentum, risked Arab displeasure by opening a dialogue with Israel, and carved out a diplomatic role in the settlement of the Persian Gulf war. Moscow has reinforced these initiatives with diplomatic, propaganda, and economic activity, including visits by Foreign Minister Shevardnadze and other top officials, a full calendar of bilateral and

between sovereign states and not a subject for negotiation. For example, press reports indicate that in early 1988 Gorbachev denied a request by Costa Rican President Arias that the USSR halt its arms supplies to Nicaragua.

Moscow's policies suggest that, although it supports compromise between its clients and their adversaries, it is not demanding that they surrender to opposition forces in a bid for "peace at any price." This probably

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multilateral economic exchanges, and skillful use of the regional media to communicate Soviet positions.

Soviet progress as a result of these initiatives has been steady rather than spectacular. The substance of policy has changed more slowly than has the style on certain key issues, including Moscow's continued support for its Vietnamese, Syrian, and Palestinian allies and its persistent attempts to diminish Western military presence and influence through its security proposals. This divergence has engendered skepticism on the part of some regional actors as to the USSR's ultimate intentions and led them to react cautiously to Soviet initiatives. For example, [ ]

[ ] characterized Gorbachev's offer in September 1988 to give up the Soviet base at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam if the United States abandons its military facilities in the Philippines as a self-serving effort to interfere in US negotiations with Manila, according to [ ]

Nevertheless, the Gorbachev regime's activism has led to improved relations with many countries in both regions. For example, [ ] reported in 1987 that the USSR's activism had improved its image and heightened Indonesian interest in expanded trade, and the atmospheres and economic dimensions of Soviet-Egyptian relations are considerably better under Gorbachev, according to [ ]

[ ] In particular, the trend toward improved relations with China, South Korea, Israel, and Saudi Arabia has increased Soviet political flexibility. These gains have, in our judgment, increased the credibility of the USSR in both areas, significantly reduced the possibility that the USSR can be "cut out" of regional affairs; and set the stage for wider and more intensive future involvement in East Asia and the Middle East.

#### Openings to the Nonsocialist World

Soviet pursuit of good relations with capitalist and pro-Western Third World states has not been limited to the Middle East and East Asia. Since he came to power, Gorbachev has greatly increased the scope of this activity across the entire Third World, using Moscow's wider range of policy tools to court nonsocialist countries worldwide. These policies have paid

some early dividends, as pro-Western and moderate nonaligned states have responded with interest to the USSR's new political tone and to its desire for expanded economic ties.

The objects of Moscow's attention fall into four overlapping categories:

- *Key Regional Actors:* Relations with states such as Iran, Thailand, Zimbabwe, and South Africa are essential to the credibility of Soviet regional diplomacy and to the USSR's attempts to portray itself as a conventional superpower, not a revolutionary threat.
- *The Newly Industrializing Countries:* Moscow's growing political and economic links to relatively well-off Third World states such as Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and South Korea represent opportunities for the USSR to expand trade and obtain technology.
- *The "Missing Pieces":* The Soviets have sought to round out their presence in the Middle East and Africa by establishing dialogue and, if possible, diplomatic relations with the handful of states in these regions whose ties to the USSR were moribund or nonexistent. Over the past four years, Moscow has opened diplomatic relations with Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Ivory Coast.
- *States in New Areas of Soviet Interest:* Through the mid-1980s, the Soviets had virtually no presence in the South Pacific and a very limited position in Central America. Moscow probably sees its new dialogue with pro-Western Central American states and establishment of diplomatic relations with several countries in the South Pacific as complementing its superpower credentials and improving its position to deny the West exclusive influence over the long term.

As in the past, the Soviets under Gorbachev have consistently tried to exploit openings created by Western, especially US, difficulties. For instance [ ] [ ]

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[ ] reported in February 1987 that Soviet entreaties to the Pacific Island states sought to take advantage of their dissatisfaction with Western policies. The Soviets also have attempted to exploit opportunities presented by US differences in recent years with the Philippines, Panama, and Saudi Arabia. At the same time, Moscow has portrayed trade with the USSR as an alternative for developing countries facing Western import restrictions.

Several factors constrain the pace at which Moscow can make further advances. It has not been willing, in line with its focus on domestic economic concerns, to pay much of a financial price to back up its political appeals. Indeed, in the South Pacific the Soviets let a fishing agreement with Kiribati—the focal point of bilateral ties—lapse in 1986 over a \$400,000 difference in terms, according [ ]. In addition, Soviet professions of interest in expanded trade have run well ahead of the USSR's ability to follow through with attractive deals (see table 3). Finally, the need to tread carefully on the sensitivities of existing allies has almost certainly slowed the improvement of Soviet relations with pro-Western states. For instance, we believe that Moscow's desire to maintain its position in Iraq and North Korea has affected the pace of development of Soviet relations with Iran and South Korea, respectively.

#### Relationships With Key Allies: Change and Continuity

**The Marxist-Leninist States: Redefining Relations**  
Under Gorbachev, economic concerns have been predominant issues in Moscow's relations with its Marxist-Leninist allies in the Third World. Soviet leaders have put these states on notice that the USSR's resources are finite and that they can no longer expect ever-increasing aid. For example, at the 27th Party Congress in early 1986, Gorbachev did not repeat the categorical pledges of Soviet aid that Brezhnev had offered the client states at the previous Congress. Moreover, [ ] the Soviets reportedly cited their many other domestic and foreign obligations in telling Cuban President Castro that they could not increase aid levels to Havana.

The Soviets have stressed to Vietnam, Cuba, and North Korea the necessity of reducing mismanagement of Soviet economic aid, of fulfilling debt and trade commitments to the Soviet Bloc, and of rebuilding their moribund economies through reforms designed to reduce central control and increase incentives. [ ]

Vietnamese General Secretary Linh described a mid-1987 meeting with Soviet officials in Moscow as unpleasant, because the Soviets demanded that Hanoi reduce its debt to the USSR. In a fall 1987 meeting with Castro, Gorbachev insisted, unsuccessfully, that Havana adopt the principles of a mixed economy, according [ ]

Soviet officials have conveyed similar messages to "socialist-oriented" clients such as Angola, Ethiopia, and Nicaragua, all of which have absorbed large amounts of Soviet aid but have made little economic progress. For example, Soviet envoys have repeatedly scolded the Nicaraguans for allowing food aid to wind up on the black market and have insisted that the Sandinistas tighten their economic management, according [ ]. A public paper presented by Soviet economic advisers in September 1985 recommended that Ethiopia allow large-scale private farming and private investment in light industry, exemplifying the USSR's insistence that economic production, not ideological orthodoxy, take first priority.

Moscow has suggested that its Communist and socialist clients seek greater trade and investment from Western countries, almost certainly in recognition that only the West can provide the levels of economic aid these countries need to stay afloat. In 1987 [ ]

[ ] said that the USSR was pushing President dos Santos to widen contacts with the West in order to obtain financial assistance, according to [ ]

[ ] reports that Soviet officials expressed satisfaction with moves made by Vietnam to unblock relations with the West, which they expect to lead to increased economic benefits for Hanoi.

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**Table 3**  
Levels of Soviet Trade With Selected Nonsocialist  
States in the Third World, 1984-87

Million US \$

		1984	1985	1986	1987			1984	1985	1986	1987
<b>Africa</b>						<b>Near East/South Asia (continued)</b>					
Kenya	Imports	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	Jordan	Imports	123.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Exports	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		Exports	41.0	11.4	0.0	0.0
	Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		Total	164.0	11.4	0.0	0.0
Nigeria	Imports	52.8	49.2	13.5	2.4	Kuwait	Imports	738.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Exports	213.8	178.9	141.9	169.1		Exports	5.2	3.8	0.0	0.0
	Total	266.6	228.1	155.4	171.5		Total	743.2	3.8	0.0	0.0
Senegal	Imports	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	Morocco	Imports	50.9	79.4	74.6	47.7
	Exports	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		Exports	145.5	135.0	93.2	107.8
	Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		Total	196.4	214.4	167.8	155.5
Zimbabwe	Imports	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	Oman	Imports	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Exports	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		Exports	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>East Asia</b>						UAE	Imports	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Indonesia	Imports	63.1	108.6	60.1	89.4		Exports	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Exports	6.9	4.4	4.4	17.7		Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Total	70.0	113.0	64.5	107.1	<b>Latin America</b>					
Malaysia	Imports	264.2	216.5	137.2	165.6	Argentina	Imports	1358.3	1475.9	273.2	658.2
	Exports	17.2	13.0	10.8	17.4		Exports	31.5	75.6	75.7	64.0
	Total	281.4	229.5	148.0	183.0		Total	1389.8	1551.5	348.9	722.2
Philippines	Imports	71.2	34.6	14.2	25.0	Brazil	Imports	458.1	456.0	335.8	397.7
	Exports	5.8	13.1	10.5	17.9		Exports	117.2	84.4	43.0	72.2
	Total	77.0	47.7	24.7	42.9		Total	575.3	540.4	378.8	469.9
Singapore	Imports	249.8	95.5	51.0	76.0	Colombia	Imports	17.8	25.4	0.0	4.4
	Exports	29.9	12.8	37.9	58.8		Exports	4.6	6.2	7.0	5.5
	Total	279.7	108.3	88.9	134.8		Total	22.4	31.6	7.0	9.9
South Korea	Imports	NA	NA	NA	NA	Mexico	Imports	17.7	19.3	10.8	43.9
	Exports	NA	NA	NA	NA		Exports	2.1	5.0	6.1	9.8
	Total	NA	NA	80.0	145.0		Total	19.8	24.3	16.9	53.7
Thailand	Imports	77.0	65.4	114.6	48.7	Uruguay	Imports	57.6	38.9	29.3	36.8
	Exports	13.9	16.1	14.5	37.9		Exports	27.9	40.2	6.1	2.5
	Total	90.9	81.5	129.1	86.6		Total	85.5	79.1	35.4	39.3
<b>Near East/South Asia</b>						Venezuela	Imports	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Egypt	Imports	332.1	369.1	380.8	468.5		Exports	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Exports	340.3	339.0	374.3	467.2		Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Total	672.4	708.1	755.1	935.7						
Iran	Imports	298.2	173.0	25.8	78.2						
	Exports	297.3	245.0	82.1	174.4						
	Total	595.5	418.0	107.9	252.6						

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Nevertheless, there are signs that the Kremlin is uneasy about the prospect that Western countries might gain enough influence through their economic and military aid programs to supplant it as the predominant power over the long run.

The Soviets are attempting to move, in our judgment, toward a new type of relationship with their Marxist-Leninist clients as part of their efforts to control foreign policy costs and ease points of tension. Although this new form is far from worked out, it will almost certainly focus on mutual benefit and economic and political pragmatism, with markedly less emphasis on ideology and military aid, which may well decline significantly as progress is made in ending insurgencies against Soviet allies. [ ]

[ ] said that Soviet leaders decided last year to take a lower military profile in client states in line with their desire to cut costs and change the Soviet Union's political image. In cases like Afghanistan and Cambodia, where the political or economic costs to the USSR are very high relative to the benefits, the Soviets probably are prepared to see the downfall of a Marxist-Leninist regime.

We do not believe, however, that this shift in Moscow's policy presages a wholesale abandonment of its key allies. [ ] stated that Moscow's commitment to its Third World clients remains firm. The USSR's continued provision of essential military aid and the fact that economic credits to its socialist-oriented clients have begun to recover under Gorbachev after sharp declines in the early 1980s suggest that the Soviets value the regional presence and political weight that they obtain from these relationships and that they intend to maintain them, albeit in changed form.

**The Major Non-Marxist Allies: Staying on Track**  
Economic issues also have figured prominently in Moscow's recent relations with key non-Marxist countries such as India, Syria, Iraq, Algeria, and Peru, states with which the USSR has enjoyed good relations for many years based on arms sales and varying degrees of common strategic interest. For example, Tripoli's poor performance in paying off its debt to the USSR was one of the reasons for the Soviet refusal of

Libyan arms requests in 1986, according [ ]

[ ] In addition, the Soviets have insisted, not always successfully, that these states not pursue policies that undermine Soviet political objectives [ ] indicates that Soviet leaders repeatedly called on Syrian President Assad to improve ties to Iraq and to help reunify the Palestine Liberation Organization, a longstanding Soviet goal made more difficult by Syrian support for radical Palestinian factions.

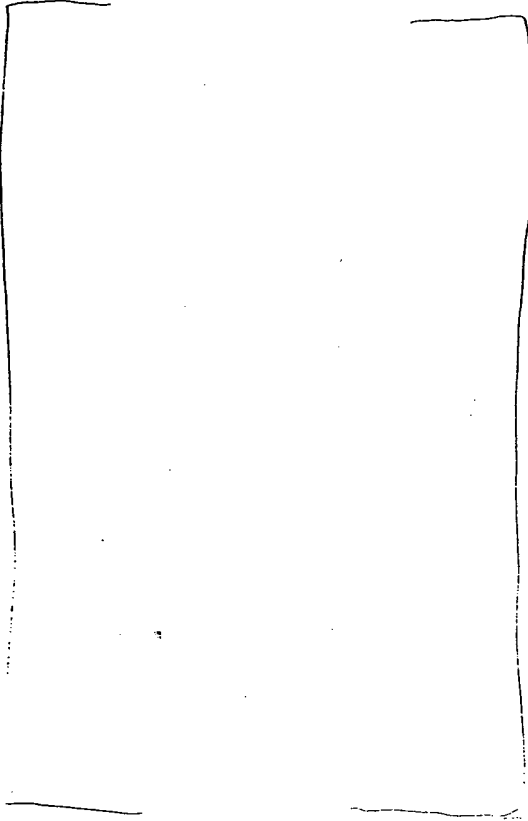
In spite of political and economic problems, Moscow has come through with the new arms and military support required to maintain its relationships with these countries (see figure 3). Gorbachev has made the Soviet "special relationship" with India a cornerstone of his diplomacy in the Third World. It is the only developing country that he has visited—once in November 1986 and again in November 1988—and press reports quote Gorbachev as citing Soviet-Indian ties as a model of relations between states with "different social systems." In recent years the Soviets have supplied India with advanced military equipment—including MiG-29 fighters—on favorable terms and increased their economic commitments. In our view, the USSR regards relations with New Delhi as a vital strategic axis of its Asia policy and would like to limit the extent of India's turn to the West for arms and prevent strains over improvement in Sino-Soviet relations from jeopardizing ties.

Soviet arms deliveries to Iraq hit an alltime peak in 1986 and have remained at high levels. In 1987, Soviet arms supplies to Syria rose substantially and Moscow canceled part of Damascus's civil and military debt in exchange for a naval repair and maintenance facility at Tartus, according [ ]

[ ] Moscow and Libya reportedly concluded an agreement in June 1988 providing [ ] in new Soviet military assistance, including MiG-29s, Su-24 light bombers and advanced air defense weapons.

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**Figure 3**  
**Soviet Military Deliveries to Key Nonsocialist**  
**Allies in the Third World, 1984-88**



Moscow almost certainly will experience difficulties over the next several years in its relations with its non-Marxist allies. These countries will resist encroachments on their political prerogatives, and all have gained experience in playing East against West in seeking advanced weapons and favorable terms. Nevertheless, we believe that the Soviets' need for hard currency, their desire to maintain their share of the world arms market, and their aim of preserving ties

that anchor their presence and influence in the Middle East, South Asia, and South America will lead them to continue using large-scale arms transfers to keep relations with these countries on a solid footing.

#### **Caution in Promoting Revolution**

Under Gorbachev, the Soviets have pursued a two-track policy toward revolution in the Third World. On the one hand, the Gorbachev leadership, like its predecessors, provides support for selected revolutionary movements. On the other hand, the Soviets have shifted from backing armed struggle as the main route to toppling target regimes toward a less militant, more politically oriented approach to promoting change.

#### **Evidence of Support**

The Soviets continue to be the primary military benefactors of the African National Congress and Southwest African People's Organization (SWAPO).

[ ] claimed in May 1988 that levels of Soviet aid to the ANC have not dropped under Gorbachev.

Moreover [ ]

[ ] said in late 1986 that the PCCh relies on the Soviets for financial backing and specialized military training, according [ ]

[ ] and statements by [ ]

[ ] suggest that the USSR is providing financial and possibly military support to the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN)



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[ ] In addition, in view of their stated intention to reduce the costs of foreign involvement, the Soviets undoubtedly do not want to assume the burden of supporting new revolutionary states that would depend on them for military and financial help. They probably also want to avoid provoking regional crises that would heighten tensions with the United States and Western Europe.

#### Signs of Change

[ ] reportedly have told [ ] that the USSR favors ending apartheid by nonviolent means and wants the ANC to build support inside South Africa by advocating moderate economic and political positions. At the same time, the Soviets have opened a range of contacts with opposition figures beyond the ANC, including Bishop Desmond Tutu and representatives of white liberal groups, and with South African academicians, journalists, and diplomats, according to press reports.

In Latin America, too, the Soviets are urging their clients to avoid getting locked into a military approach. Moscow counseled the PCCh to participate in the 1988 plebiscite on Pinochet's rule and to seek wider alliances with moderate Chilean opposition forces, according to [ ] Also, [ ] ra

[ ] that Soviet officials appeared to favor political resolution of the conflict in El Salvador, according to a generally reliable source. In late August 1988, according to [ ]

[ ] a Soviet diplomat criticized the FMLN for being too inflexible and naive in the belief that it could defeat the Salvadoran Government militarily; he stated that the only way forward was through negotiations.

Several factors probably have contributed to Moscow's changing approach to armed struggle in the Third World. Soviet leaders apparently believe that the prospects for armed struggle are poor. For instance, [ ]

[ ] that military action against South Africa stood little chance of success, according

The military side of the two-track policy enables Moscow to maintain its credibility as an actor in the situations in South Africa and Chile, where its support for the ANC, SWAPO, and the PCCh still represent its main entree. The USSR's new political approach, meanwhile, allows it to expand its options for influencing future developments in a manner consistent with its objectives of controlling costs and avoiding confrontation in the Third World.

In view of these objectives, we believe that for the foreseeable future the Soviets will be wary of military intervention in the Third World. In March 1988, former International Department Chief Dobrynin reportedly told a meeting of Communist party officials in Havana that "revolutionary forces" should not count on drawing the USSR into local conflicts. This cautionary line does not, however, rule out the use of arms and security assistance to gain influence with a regime in a country of particular regional importance. For an assessment of Soviet capabilities for projecting power in the Third World, see appendix.

#### Assessment and Outlook

##### Progress to Date

The most notable success of recent Soviet policy in the Third World has been, in our view, the effort to improve the USSR's image in the developing world and to reestablish the USSR as a legitimate actor in regional affairs. Third World leaders and publics have a more favorable view of Gorbachev, the USSR, and Soviet intentions, according to assessments from US embassies around the globe. This opens possibilities

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for expanding relations with a variety of states and international organizations and gives the Soviets a far higher degree of diplomatic credibility and flexibility than they enjoyed under Brezhnev.

From a Soviet standpoint, the problem of regional conflicts almost certainly appears less acute than it did in 1985 and 1986. The "bleeding wound" of Afghanistan has been stanchd, albeit not healed; the US-mediated agreement on Angola promises to relieve South African pressure on the Luanda regime; the rebel threat to the Sandinista government has diminished; and the Cambodian settlement process no longer poses a major obstacle to Sino-Soviet rapprochement. Nevertheless, the Soviets still face some difficulties, as insurgencies against their allies persist in Ethiopia and Mozambique, and we expect them to continue to press these regimes to move toward political settlements.

Moscow has not yet enjoyed much success on the economic front. Although progress toward settlement of regional conflicts promises to ease the Soviets' economic load, the costs of backing their Communist and socialist-oriented allies remain high, and these states have made little headway toward economic viability. The slow growth of trade with the Third World is almost certainly disappointing to the Soviets, and the prospects for a rapid increase are poor until domestic economic reform takes wider hold.

#### New Challenges for the United States

We believe that Moscow still regards the Third World as an important arena for Soviet interests and that the United States will have to deal with continuing Soviet efforts to expand the USSR's presence and influence there. However, the new dimensions of Moscow's policy in the Third World, notably its downgrading of ideology and its emphasis on good relations with all states, are likely to pose new questions for US policy.

The USSR's new approach to the nonsocialist developing states, its changing relations with its clients, and its success in improving its outside image promise to make it more difficult for Washington to "sell" Third World leaders on the need to contain an expansionist, revolutionary Soviet Union and its allies.

This may make it harder for the United States to maintain its military access in some areas. Also, Moscow is in a much better position to try to take the initiative on issues of interest to the Third World, as Gorbachev did with his proposals to the UN on debt relief last December, and we expect the Soviets to continue to offer effectively packaged proposals on security and economic problems. In general, as the Soviets reform their policy apparatus and heavyhanded diplomats give way to more polished envoys, the West can no longer count on Soviet diplomacy to experience the "self-inflicted wounds" that have plagued it in the past.

The United States also will have to deal with Gorbachev's ability to use surprise effectively as a policy tool. Over the past four years, he has made a number of dramatic foreign policy moves, including the elimination of the SS-20 missile force, acceptance of on-site inspection for arms control verification, withdrawal from Afghanistan, and unilateral cuts in Soviet conventional forces. Regional issues where Gorbachev may see the need for one of his characteristic bold strokes include:

- *East Asian security.* The Soviets could proclaim a unilateral withdrawal from their base in Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam as part of an effort to influence the debate in the Philippines about US bases and exacerbate questions in the region about the need for a US military presence.
- *Relations with Israel.* Moscow could restore relations with Tel Aviv without waiting for Israeli acceptance of an international peace conference. The Soviets might consider this step, in spite of the reaction of their Arab allies, in order to reassert their role in the peace process should they perceive the United States to be in a position to broker a Camp David-style agreement or otherwise monopolize the settlement process.
- *Military presence in Cuba.* An offer to withdraw the Soviet brigade in Cuba either unilaterally or in exchange for a US departure from its naval base at Guantanamo might be seen by the Soviets as a way to remove an irritant in US-Soviet relations, make

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clear to Castro that his defense needs are exaggerated, and energize Moscow's proposals for the elimination of overseas military bases and forces. Such an offer would not affect the USSR's important intelligence collection capabilities in Cuba or its air and naval access, and would leave in place the 2,500 to 2,800 advisers and technicians of the Soviet Military Advisory Group.

The United States will also face the question of how to respond to the Soviets' appeal for increased East-West cooperation. Soviet officials have already called for joint action on a range of economic, ecological, and humanitarian problems in the Third World, although they have been slow to offer specifics on concrete programs. Over the next few years Moscow may revive the idea of a code of conduct for superpower relations in the developing world. Soviet academicians have been exploring the concept—previously raised by Soviet leaders in the early 1980s—as a way to regulate East-West competition. In a June 1988 article, Gorbachev adviser Yevgeniy Primakov suggested some general “rules of the game,” including renunciation by the superpowers of unilateral intervention in regional crises and mutual reduction of arms supplies to Third World states. It is not yet clear how far Soviet leaders would be willing to push the United States to codify these ideas in bilateral agreements.

#### Continuity Not Guaranteed

As long as domestic reform remains the overriding priority of Soviet leaders, promotion of a stable international environment, the expansion of economic relations, and controlling the costs of Soviet commitments will remain central objectives of the USSR's regional policy. At the same time, Gorbachev and his political allies probably will not be inclined to surrender easily existing Soviet positions in the Third World. To do so would, at the very least, provide ammunition for their domestic opponents.

These policies will be subject, however, to a number of factors that could lead to significant change, including:

- *Political rivalry.* The specifics of Third World policy do not seem to be a bone of contention among Soviet leaders, but debates during 1988 about the role of “class struggle” in Soviet foreign policy suggest that such issues could become pawns in a political battle, potentially affecting the course of Soviet behavior in areas such as support for revolutionary movements.
- *Leadership change.* If Gorbachev were ousted, Soviet regional policies would undoubtedly be affected. A new regime that came to power on the basis of opposition to Gorbachev's domestic initiatives, for example, might be inclined to take a more ideological, less cooperative line on Third World issues.
- *Domestic economic trends.* An economic downturn could put even more pressure on military and foreign assistance budgets and lead Moscow to pull back sharply from its clients in distant regions such as southern Africa and Latin America.

It is possible that Soviet perceptions of a future swing in US policy toward isolation could lead Moscow to behave more assertively in the Third World. There are signs, however, that this traditional Leninist pattern of competition—retreat when the “main adversary” is active, advance when it is not—is being questioned. Soviet academic observers have argued that this is the operational code of a weak country and that the USSR, having attained superpower status, no longer needs to regard every shift in the Third World scene from a “zero-sum perspective.”



## Appendix

### Soviet Power-Projection Capabilities

The Soviet military is trained, equipped, and structured primarily for a war in Central Europe. While the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan and the recent deployment of troops to the Caucasus region demonstrate the USSR's capability to deploy military forces and equipment to its periphery, Soviet capabilities for longer range projection of forces are more limited. Nevertheless, the steady increase in size, capability, range of operations, and scope of activity of Soviet forces over the last 20 years has improved somewhat Moscow's capability for distant military operations.

The Soviet Ground Forces maintain seven airborne divisions that could be quickly deployed to other areas. These divisions are kept almost fully manned and, once mobilized, could begin to move within hours. Because of the limitations of the Soviet airlift capability, however, it would probably take several days to move one entire division. The airborne forces' lack of heavy armor, moreover, limits their firepower and the length of time they could sustain military operations without the introduction of more heavily equipped regular ground forces. The Soviets maintain over 200 regular ground force divisions, but only about a third of these—most located in Eastern Europe and the western USSR or opposite China—are considered "ready" units, manned with over 50 percent of their authorized wartime strength and almost all of their combat equipment. Even most of these "ready" units would require extensive mobilization to deploy. Moreover, the equipment of the regular ground forces is not easily deployable by air.

The Soviet Navy regularly deploys to distant areas to promote and defend the USSR's interests abroad—by protecting the maritime and fishing fleets, asserting Soviet rights in international waters, collecting intelligence and monitoring Western naval forces, and, through port visits, displaying military might and demonstrating Moscow's support of Third World governments. Deployment of large forces to distant areas is not one of the Soviet Navy's traditional strengths,

however. With the exception of Cam Ranh Bay, the Soviets do not maintain the large military bases overseas that are required to support such forces. Moreover, the Soviets lack advanced cargo transfer and adequate numbers of supply ships and tenders, relying instead on merchant vessels that function as naval auxiliaries when needed. These "auxiliaries" in turn depend on supply facilities in foreign ports. Because of the Soviets' concern that they might suddenly be denied access to foreign-owned facilities, they have tended to employ mostly movable or "removable" assets such as floating piers, tenders and repair ships, and floating drydocks to support their overseas military presence. Despite their loss of access to several naval facilities in the 1970s, the Soviets in the past decade have expanded their access to other ports—such as those at Dahlak Island, Ethiopia; Aden, South Yemen; Luanda, Angola; and Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam. A 1987 agreement with the Syrians also granted Soviet naval ships greater use of port facilities at Tartus. Nonetheless, use of these ports has decreased in the past few years as the Soviet Navy's number of out-of-area ship days has declined.

The relatively small size of Soviet amphibious forces, divided among four fleets, would limit the scope of an amphibious operation in distant waters. Soviet naval infantry consists of roughly 18,000 troops, compared with the US Marine Corps' 198,000 troops. Soviet amphibious capabilities have increased over the past decade, however, with the introduction of large numbers of air-cushion vehicles and amphibious ships with greater size and endurance. The Soviets continue to procure Ropucha-class LSTs—an amphibious warfare ship that can accommodate 12 medium tanks or up to 26 wheeled vehicles and 225 troops. The Soviets began in 1978 to procure Ivan Rogov-class amphibious assault ships—the first type equipped with a

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helicopter deck. This ship is capable of sustained long-distance operations and fitted with a command and communications suite that enhances its capabilities as a command vessel. Its procurement suggested that the Soviets were about to substantially expand their amphibious warfare capabilities, although the construction of only two ships of this class thus far may indicate that this goal has a low priority.

Because the Soviets have not emphasized the development of an aircraft carrier fleet, they would also face a shortage of tactical airpower in a distant foreign intervention. The inability of the vast majority of their land-based tactical aircraft to conduct aerial refueling exacerbates this shortage. They have, however, marginally upgraded their ability to project tactical airpower with the Kiev-class vertical-takeoff-and-landing-aircraft carrier, the fourth and final unit of which should be operational this year. The Soviets are currently fitting out the lead ship of the new Tbilisi-class aircraft carrier, which will support conventional-takeoff-and-landing aircraft as well as helicopters.

In the past decade the Soviets have made a number of improvements to their military transportation capabilities that would serve them well in an attempt to project forces abroad. The Soviets are replacing the aging An-12 Cub aircraft with the Il-76 Candid, significantly improving their ability to move troops and equipment over long distances. The An-124 Condor, introduced in 1987, rivals the US C-5 Galaxy in size and performance and, if deployed in significant numbers, could also greatly expand Soviet airlift capability, although its unpressurized cabin suggests that it will be used primarily for transporting equipment.

Despite such improvements, the Soviets would be hard pressed to rapidly deploy or sustain military forces in distant operations, and might find it impossible if opposed by modern air or naval power. Almost all of

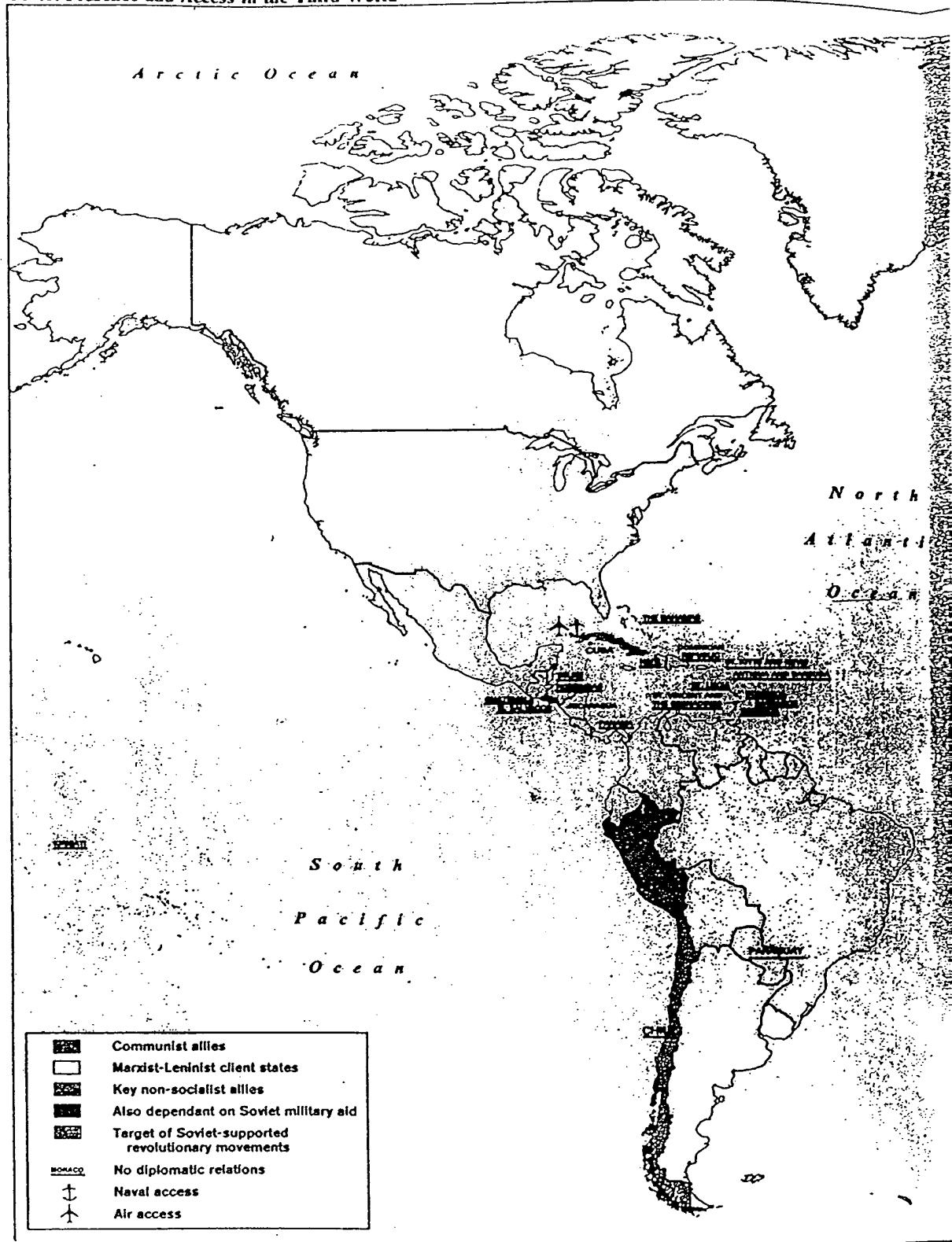
the military equipment needed for operations would have to be brought forward because the Soviets maintain little pre-positioned equipment abroad. Naval forces would not have sufficient protection, because of their limited air defenses and antisubmarine warfare capabilities. Airborne forces deploying abroad would require overflight clearances, as well as staging rights at foreign airfields along the way to compensate for their inability to refuel en route. These forces would also lack adequate air defenses and tactical air support to protect them en route or on the scene.

Although the Soviets under Gorbachev have thus far continued to gradually increase the size and capabilities of their forces, Moscow's drive for greater economy in the military apparently has restrained somewhat the growth of Soviet power-projection capabilities. Economic considerations apparently are the prime reason for the decrease in Soviet naval operations outside home waters since 1984. Moreover, most Soviet naval exercises in recent years have been shorter in duration, although more intense, and have stressed defense of the homeland from within Soviet home waters. These changes have decreased Soviet readiness to perform a power-projection mission.

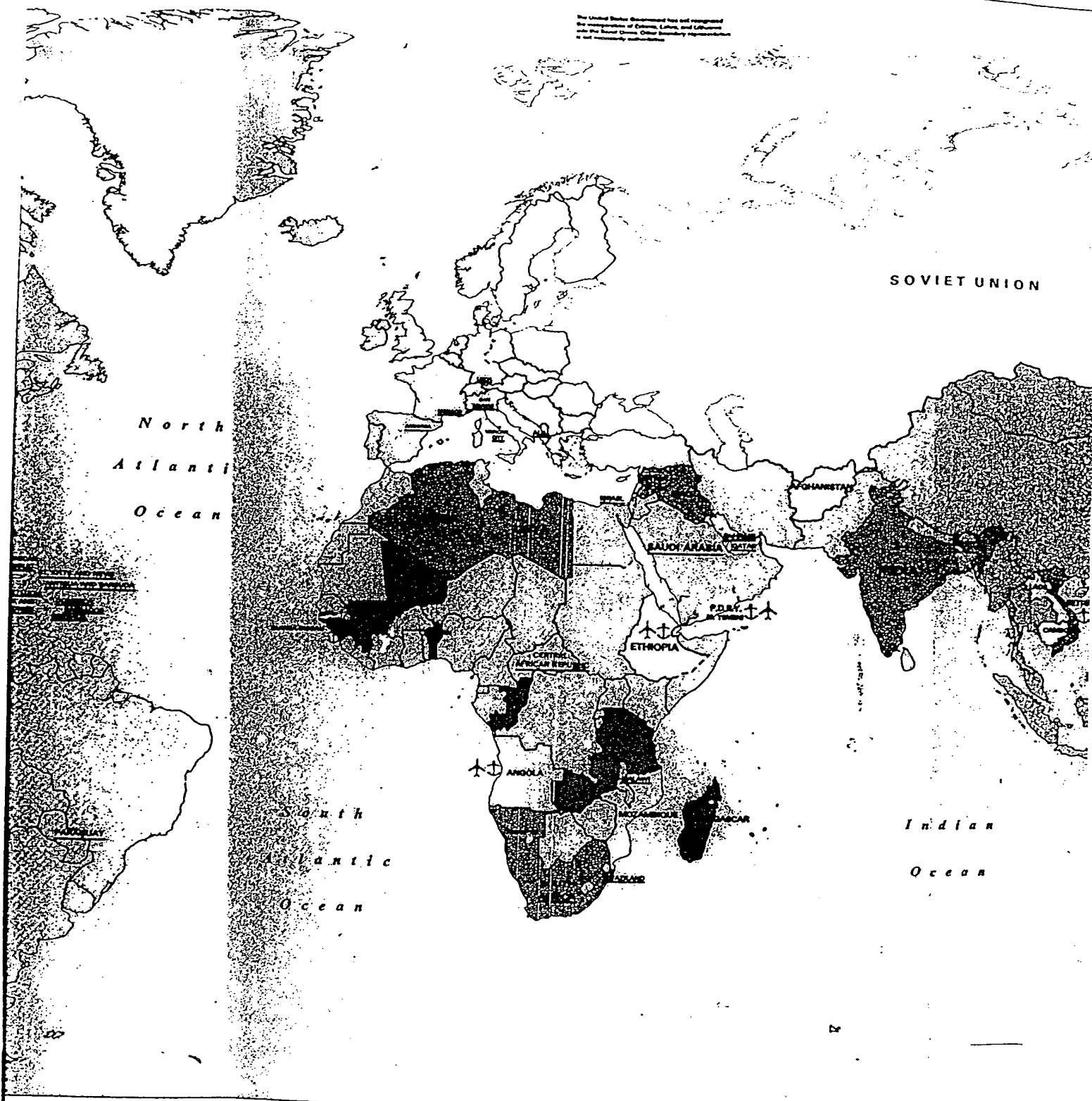
In the future we expect Soviet capabilities for distant military operations to improve gradually through equipment modernization and through a limited increase in access to maintenance and resupply facilities abroad. Nevertheless, the Soviets' capabilities for direct military intervention will remain limited, and we expect them to continue to rely primarily on political maneuvering and on other indirect means of projecting influence, such as arms sales, military and economic aid, and covert action.

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Figure 4  
Soviet Presence and Access in the Third World

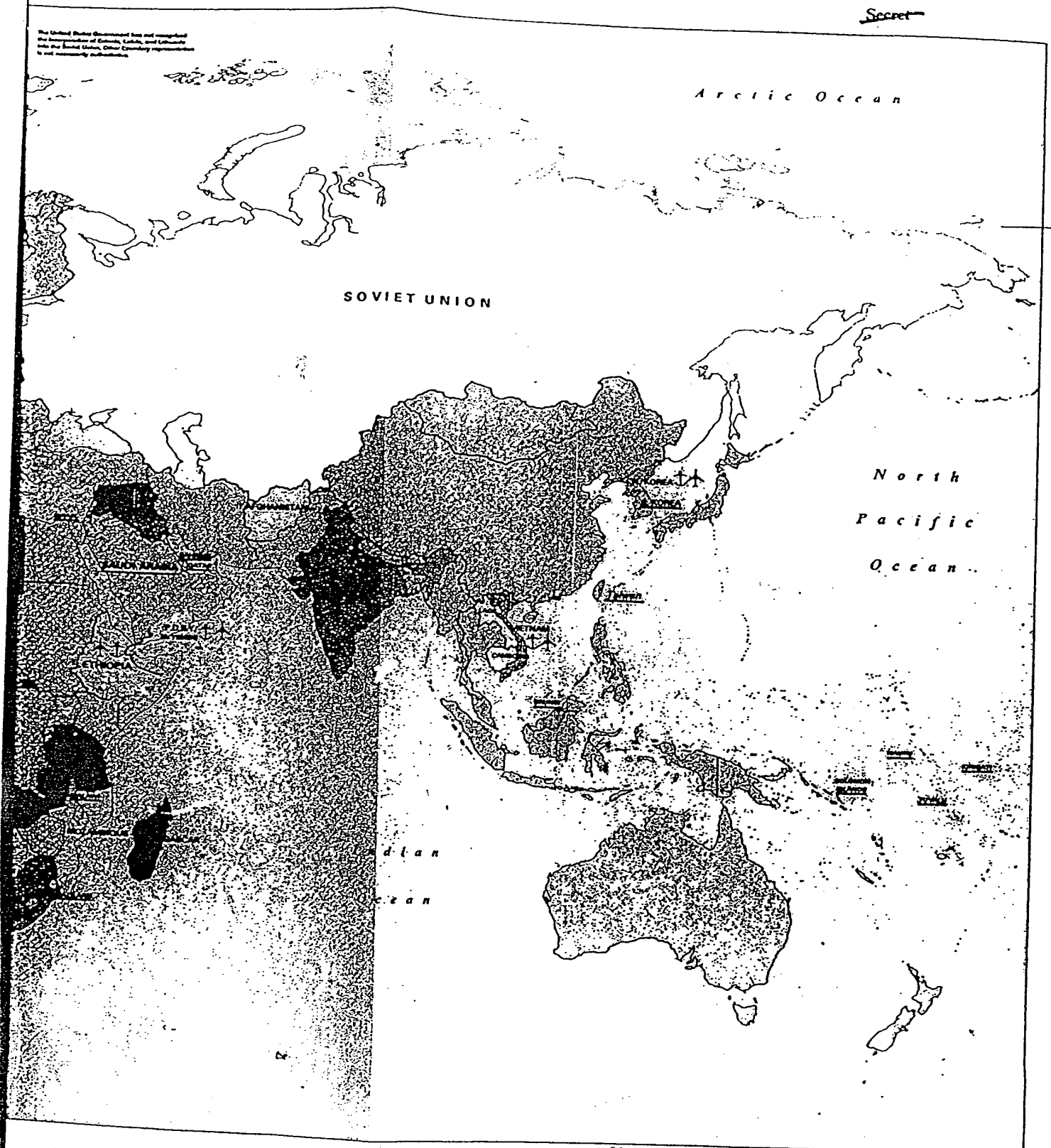


The United States Government has not recognized the independence of Cyprus, Lebanon, and Libya, and the Soviet Union. Other boundary representations are not necessarily authoritative.



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The United States Government has not recognized the boundaries of Eastern, Central, and Southern Asia. Other boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.



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